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Congresswoman Matsui Remarks at the FCC's Federal-State Joint Conference on Advanced Services

Announces she will reintroduce USF bill for broadband adoption

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA), a member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology recorded remarks that were shown at the FCC's Federal-State Joint Conference on Advanced Services this morning. The Conference is to identify and discuss best practices learned from broadband adoption programs and academic studies and how implementation of these practices can help close the digital divide. Her remarks are as follows:

"As part of our nation's economic security in the 21st Century, we will need to continue to strive to address a looming crisis that largely gets overlooked, and that is closing our nation's digital divide and improving digital literacy.

"In today's economy, the internet is a necessity, not a luxury. If you don't have access, you are simply at a competitive disadvantage. More and more Americans rely on the internet and their mobile devices for just about everything now, their favorite apps, education, access to innovative health care services, and for job searches.

"In fact, more than 80 percent of available jobs now require online job applications.

“Unfortunately, it is estimated that nearly 100 million Americans have not yet adopted broadband Internet at home, many of whom simply can’t afford the high-cost of broadband service. Several prominent studies by Pew, and the FCC, have strongly suggested that broadband adoption rates are largely associated with income levels, and the high cost of broadband services.

“It is imperative that our nation close this economic digital divide.

“To that end, I applaud the FCC for initiating a broadband adoption pilot program, modeled after legislation I first introduced in 2009, the Broadband Affordability Act. The bill would expand the Universal Service Fund “Lifeline Assistance” Program for universal broadband adoption. This proposal will help ensure that all Americans living in urban, and rural areas, have access to affordable broadband services.

“To ensure this issue continues gaining the support and attention it deserves, I plan to reintroduce this legislation again in the next few weeks.

“Understand that I will continue to advocate for this initiative until we achieve a permanent broadband adoption program. It is the future, particularly as we move more and more to a digital economy.

“In the coming weeks, I will join Congressmen Ed Markey and John Lewis in introducing a resolution to designate March 21st as “National Digital Literacy Day” to promote digital literacy, broadband access, and broadband adoption in the United States.

“Access to the internet only goes so far, it is imperative that all Americans are proficient in using the Internet.

“In closing, I want to thank you again for inviting me to speak today. I commend the FCC for putting on this event. It will serve as an important forum to promote broadband adoption and digital literacy in this country.”

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